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ABSTRACT

Higher Education, the institutions as well as the associations, have long regarded adult or extension education as a stepchild; consequently, instructional broadcasting as an educational medium has been all but ignored. Yet by 1976 the establishment of the University of North America, a confederation of several radically different regional higher education institutions and agencies will be proclaimed. These institutions will have their origin in the concept of the Open University, pioneered in Great Britain and Japan, and will bring a multimedia approach to continuing higher education. For example, the University of New England, one of the regional institutions, will consist of a confederation of junior colleges, colleges, universities, and educational agencies. Television will be the principal teaching medium, supplemented by radio, correspondence courses, films, tapes etc. It will have a curriculum for today's world and will be open to all who are interested. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting should be the advocate of continuing education and instructional broadcasting in the national councils of higher education. Elements essential for the establishment of open universities are: (1) a cadre of leadership from higher and continuing education, and public and instructional broadcasting; (2) resources; (3) credibility; (4) research on the adult learner and on the most effective use of television for learning; and (5) planning. (AF)

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THE OTHER END OF SESAME STREET*

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I should like to begin with a prediction:

Five years from now, in 1976, the year of our country's bi-centennial celebration, the 31st National Conference on Higher Education will be the scene of a momentous "happening"--the birth, of a continental scale, of an entirely new kind of "institution" of higher learning. From the Conference rostrum, the President of the United States will proclaim the establishemnt of the University of North America, a confederation of several radically different regional higher education institutions and agencies that will have come into being between now and 1976 in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

These new regional "institutions" will shape the course of events in higher education on this continent during the last quarter of the 20th Century. They will have had their origins in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the concept of "The Open University," a multi-media approach to continuing higher education. Pioneered in Great Britain and Japan, the Open University will be brought into being in the United States in the next half decade through the combined efforts of National Educational Organizations (such as the American Association for Higher Education and the National Commission on Accrediting), national examining agencies (such as the College Entrance Examination Board and the American College Testing Program), national public broadcasting organizations (such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Association of Educational Broadcasters), and regional consortia of junior colleges, colleges, universities, and public broadcasting stations.

In announcing the birth of the University of North America, the President in 1976 will acknowledge a debt of thanks to the leaders of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, who, in 1970, began to ask these questions: "What's at the other end of Sesame Street? Why can't broadcasting make learning just as exciting and meaningful for adults as that magnificent television program does for children? What should the Corporation and other national educational agencies be doing to help colleges and universities transform continuing education into something truly excellent and worthwhile?"

The answers, of course, were there all the while--and we in higher education had only to part the underbrush in the early 1970s to put them all together: at the "other end of Sesame Street" stood the Open University, another idea whose time had come.

So much for prophecy. My purpose here is not to speculate about <u>whether</u> the Open University will be brought into being over the next five years, but, rather, to suggest <u>how</u> it can come about through the development of a series of regional models.

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In the 1970s, we are told by critics of the entire U.S. system of education, our society must produce new kinds of institutions of higher learning, relevant to and responsive to the needs of the times. Students themselves are in the vanguard of critics. They see our educational institutions--from pre-school through graduate school--outdated, our values false, our teaching dull, our priorities wrong. They perceive educators as being preoccupied with promotion and status, and hung up on research grants, tests, rules, credits, admission requirements, academic jargon, footnotes, and government contracts. They see barriers to college entrance, roadblocks to educational innovations, and a reward system based on the curiously inverted principle that the higher your rank and the more you're paid, the fewer students you're expected to teach!

The educational establishment, as the students and other critics view it (quite rightly, in my opinion), has become a prisoner of its own rhetoric. In the name of excellence, we have sanctified trivia. In the name of democracy, we have stifled individuality. In the name of pluralism, we have exalted conformity. We pay lip service to diversity, yet our schools and colleges are dishearteningly imitative, one of another. High schools shape their demands to fit the specifications of the colleges, junior colleges copy four-year institutions, colleges try to be universities, and all universities want to be like Harvard. The system makes poor black youth feel locked out and middle class whites feel locked in.

In short, the system is not working and something has to be done about it. Specifically, we must back off and start over--or, at the very least, regroup and rearrange our forces. And while we seek to change the institutions we already have, we must turn our attention to creating new ones.

Enter, the Open University and its regional models: new kinds of institutions for the continuing education of adults. For openers, let us consider the possibility of establishing the University of New England--an "Open University" for the Northeastern United States.

When it comes into being--as it must in the years immediately ahead--the University of New England will not exist in one place or on one campus. It will be neither "inner city" nor "suburban." It will not even be a single "institution" in the conventional sense. Instead, the University of New England will be a confederation of a selected group of Junior Colleges, Colleges, Universities (from both the public and private sectors), and educational agencies and associations working cooperatively to add a new dimension to higher education through the medium of public broadcasting. The University of New England will use television as its principal teaching medium, supplemented by radio, correspondence study, films, tapes, programmed instruction, libraries, theatres, museums, tutorials, counseling centers, conferences, and short-term seminars at regional learning institutes. The faculty of the University of New England will include broadcasters as well as educators, laymen as well as professionals, students as well as teachers. In the University of New England, the young will have their chance to teach the old, the blacks to instruct the whites.

The University of New England will have a curriculum for today's world and time. It will encompass courses dealing with the environment, the arts, the mass media, the cities, the law, education, religion, human relations, international affairs, science technology, public policy, the history of great ideas, the lives of great men. It will offer credits, administer tests, grant degrees, and charge a modest tuition. It will develop and distribute instructional materials. Anyone over fifteen may enroll; there will be no other entrance requirements. For those

who need it, the University of New England will offer remedial work in communications skills and mathematics and other preparatory subjects. The University of New England will be a public interest institution: open to all who wish to learn.

Thus, as is the case with England's "Open University" which is now underway, the University of New England would represent, basically, an integrated, multi-media approach to continuing education. Instructional TV, instructional radio, correspondence study, programmed learning, various audio-visual devices, libraries, counseling services, tutorials, and face-to-face summer sessions seminars--all would be combined to make available to New Englanders a series of year-long collegiate-level courses planned and taught by faculty members from the colleges and universities in the region, with the cooperation of public television stations. Students desiring to enroll in UNE for credit would apply for admission, course materials would be provided, and examinations monitored. Special equipment (e.g. language laboratories) would be accessible for independent study at the local learning centers, where advisors and tutors would be available.

Developmental responsibilities for the University of New England would rest with a confederation including state commissions or boards of higher education, the New England Board of Higher Education, the New England Regional Commission, the New England Governor's Conference, the New England Center for Continuing Education, interested junior colleges, colleges, and universities in the region (both public and private), and the public and instructional broadcasting stations in the Northeast. The consortium (or confederation) thus formed would provide various services, training programs, resources for the planning needed for courses to be offered, and testing and evaluation materials.

(Similar models of the U.S. version of the "Open University could be developed, let us say, in New Jersey (the "University of New Jersey"), upstate New York (the "University of Upstate New York), the Midwest (the "University of the Midwest") and so on. Finally, these experimental models could be linked together in the country's nationwide "Open University"--The University of North America, which, of course, would include participating sister institutions in Canada and Mexico.)

Given the importance to American society of higher education, continuing adult education, and public broadcasting, the interlocking relationship that ought to exist among them seems obvious: in today's campus context, the continuing education function should enjoy a status at least co-equal with that of resident instruction, and broadcasting as a medium of teaching should be integral to both. Yet continuing education has always been more or less of a step-child in academic circles, and instructional broadcasting is still treated pretty much as an "add-on" on most campuses where it has been tried. In the conventional higher education scheme of things today, in other words, continuing education and instructional broadcasting are simply not in the main tent. Faculty members from the disciplines and the professions tend to regard them as sideshows--something to do while moon-lighting, or as an overload. The blue chips are still on research and on the teaching of graduates and undergraduates--on campus, in classrooms, laboratories, and lecture halls. Innovation is <u>not</u> the name of the game; at least not yet.

Nowhere has the lack of attention to and concern for adult education and instructional broadcasting been more evident than in the priorities and programs of national organizations and conferences concerned with higher education. Until this year for example, our own National Conference has tended to give short shrift to these areas. And how long has it been, since the Association of American Universities, the Association of American Colleges, the American Council on Education, the American Council of Learned Societies, or the American Association of University Professors had anything to say about broadcasting as an educational medium? How much attention is paid to the

field of adult education at meetings of the American Psychological Association or the American Association for the Advancement of Science? How many college presidents or deans highlight instructional broadcasting or continuing education as themes in their annual reports or convocation talks?

Institutional values reflect professional values. "Extension people" and educational broadcasters are, more often than not, treated as second-class citizens in the academic community, and a large segment of the professoriat continues to view credits earned or courses taken off-campus--whether by correspondence, television, radio, or at "extension centers"--as something less than the genuine article--although there is no research whatsoever to support this bias. With all the talk about new curricula, new teaching methods, and new institutional forms; with all the investment that has been made in experimentation; with all the pressure for change and reform in higher education, the old myth endures: face-to-face on-campus teaching is thought to be somehow "superior" to the other brand.

It is this entrenched mythology, both institutional and professional, that has made for such slow going in continuing education and instructional broadcasting, as compared with conventional higher education, in the past decade. It is this same mythology which must be faced and dealt with squarely by the higher education community if the continuing education of adults via the broadcasting media is to achieve status in the academic enterprise in the years immediately ahead.

Nationally, what continuing education and instructional broadcasting need in the councils of higher learning is a new broker, a fresh advocate. That role can and should be assumed, in my judgment, by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. What the Corporation could bring to that role would be the determination to create a "new dimension" for higher education--a concept that would make broadcasting a full partner in the educational establishment, an idea that would revolutionize the teaching of adults. As the champion for the "open university," as the co-sponsor of the University of North America, the Corporation would be carrying out its mandate to serve the public interest and further the general welfare. Its good offices could be the necessary catalyst for bringing together regionally and nationally the leadership from the academic community, adult education, and public broadcasting needed to bring the first models of the Open University into being.

A national strategy to build the needed new regional confederations in higher education essential for the establishment of "open universities" requires the following elements:

1. Leadership. A cadre of leaders from the fields of higher education, continuing education, and public and instructional broadcasting should be identified and convened as a steering agency on a national basis, with regular meetings over an extended period of time scheduled to review plans, cut red tape, effect contacts, prepare proposals, and so forth. I believe the American Association for Higher Education and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting should bring such a steering committee together.

2. Resources. If the Open University is to become a reality, whether regionally or nationally, the major educational foundations and federal agencies, the commerical networks, and private industry all must participate with financial support for regional pilot, experimental projects. The initial involvement of institutions and agencies in an "open university confederation" will be a new commitment for most participants, and thus outside funding will be basic to getting

the projects planned and launched.

3. Credibility. Whatever is done to bring about the development of the University of North America will need to be accepted both by the general public and by the academic and broadcasting communities, which means securing a wide base of professional support from assorted agencies, such as the College Entrance Examination Board, the American College Testing Program, the Educational Testing Service, the National Commission on Accrediting, the Adult Education Association of the U.S., the National University Extension Association, and others. Similarly, advantage should be taken of the existence in almost every state of Statewide Councils on Educational Broadcasting, including a broad representation of laymen, to involve the public in developing new regional "universities without walls."

4. Research. Already some evidence has accumulated in the literature on visual literacy to indicate that young people today, used to the new media, are unwilling not to be visually stimulated in their educational experiences. Young men and women who have grown with the stimulation of movies and television will begin demanding curricula, both in resident and in continuing education, which include more visual stimulation. Obviously a person who is forced to learn only in a verbal environment is unable to learn as much as he could if verbal were coupled with tactile and visual. Television demands the complete participation of the individual and involves visual as well as verbal stimulation. "Education," it has been said, "really consists of exchanging time for experience. TV can change reality into images at the speed of light, which means, if it is properly used, students can gain enormously much more experience in the same amounts of time without the need to decode." The establishment of regional "open university" models such as the University of New England and others being proposed here should be buttressed by the best possible educational research--something, alas, we have all too often neglected in mounting new projects within and among institutions of higher learning.

In addition to broadcasting, of course, the field of adult education itself offers a goldmine for research. Mature and middle-aged students are venturing again into the world of schools and colleges. In order to prepare for them, either on campus or as enrollees in "open universities," we must begin concentrating research efforts in two areas: first, the nature of the learner; and, secondly, the content and methods of presentation of subject matter to the "older" learner. On the basis of existing studies, there seems to be every reason to believe that old learners will be successful and quite capable of continuing to expand their knowledge, whether it be through formal institutions, courses through television offered by "open universities," or through some combination of both. Obviously, it will be necessary to structure the courses and curricula to take advantage of the proficiencies of the older learner as well as to compensate for his deficiencies.

5. Planning. To establish the new kinds of institutions envisioned in this report will take time--time to develop a prospectus, time to build budgets, time to recruit staff, time to solicit support, time to create regional prototypes (such as the proposed University of New England), time to hold conferences, time to develop materials, time to meld institutions and agencies within those regions where there is something like a "critical mass" in academic and broadcasting leadership.

Can the "open university" really come into being in the United States? Can an integrated, multi-media adult learning system be established in this country

through a series of regional confederations? Can an effective, on-going, new, fresh, workable relationship be constructed involving the best talent there is from the fields of higher education, continuing education, and instructional broadcasting? Can the rigidities and obstacles present in academic institutions and organizations be overcome to make possible the development of the University of New England and other regional models, leading toward the establishment of the University of North America? Can what we now refer to, in its infancy, as "the external degree" evolve rapidly to become, more properly, what Jana Matthews of the Massachusetts State College System calls the "alternate degree," indicating its intrinsic, integral relationship to the academic enterprise? Do we in higher education truly have the courage, and the will, and the daring, and the imagination to turn the system around in the next half decade--as we know we must?

I think the answer to all of those questions can be yes. I also know that if we don't get moving and build the University of North America along the lines proposed here, someone else, someone from outside the profession perhaps, will do it for us. One way or another, the open university is going to be a fact of life in this country five years from now. If you somehow doubt it, just plan to attend the 31st National Conference on Higher Education in 1976 and see if I'm not right!